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ABSTRACT

This monograph discusses the linguistic problems posed by the teaching and learning of non-African languages in multilingual African situations. Chapter 1 identifies and discusses the linguistic problems of foreign language education. Chapter 2 examines (1) the nature of linguistic descriptions, (2) the assumptions underlying contrastive analysis generally held to be indispensable to foreign language teaching, and (3) descriptive problems such as linguistic norm specification and deviation from the norm with reference to French. Chapter 3 discusses findings of research on French language contact in the Ivory Coast and Ghana. The purpose of this research is not only to invite researchers in the field of foreign language education to reflect on the descriptive and analytic linguistic problems discussed but also to help reorient research in this branch of linguistics in Africa and elsewhere. (Author/NCR)

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TEACHING A FOREIGH LANGUAGE TO THE WEST AFRICAN STUDENT: AN EXAMINATION OF THE LINGUISTIC PROBLEM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FRENCH PHONOLOGY

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PREFACE

The problems that follow the introduction of foreign language teaching in multilingual societies are not merely linguistic, but also social, economic and psychological since language is inextricably involved in the destiny of the individual as well as of a given society or culture. In post-independence Africa, there is a keen feeling that foreign language education presents a threat to the existence and use of indigenous languages and cultures.

The purpose of this monograph is not to examine all of these aspects of foreign language education. Nor is it our aim to write another manual on "Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language". Our aim which is more modest is to discuss the linguistic problems posed by the teaching and learning of non-African languages in multilingual African situations.

The monograph is organised in the following way. Chapter 1 attempts to identify and discuss the linguistic problems of foreign language education. Chapter 2 examines the nature of linguistic descriptions, the assumptions underlying contrastive analysis generally held to be indispensable to foreign language teaching and descriptive problems like linguistic norm specification and deviation from the norm with reference to French.

Chapter 3 then presents and discusses some of the findings of personal research on French language contact in the Ivory Coast and Chana

with respect to work done by other researchers in West Africa.

Some of the ideas discussed in this work are not new: we have expressed them either at international linguistic conferences, or most people specializing or specialists in language studies are familiar with them. We hope, however, that the present effort will not only invite researchers in the field of foreign language education to reflect on descriptive, or analytic linguistic problems, such as we discuss, in in the context of their language speciality, but also help to reorient research in this branch of linguistics in Africa, and elsewhere.

I should like to express my sincere thanks to Mrs. Claudette Welsh of the Graduate Department of French, University of Toronto, for her willing assistance with last minute corrections of this work.

Emmanuel N. Kwofie

Toronto, August 1977

CHAPTER 1

VARIETIES OF LANGUAGE AND USAGE: PROBLEMS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Language education is justifiably the province of the language teacher. However, some of the problems connected with language teaching fall outside the competence of the language teacher: these are the problems of textbook design, and the political and educational decisions regarding language use.

Since language teaching critically depends on conceptions of the nature and functions of language as well as on a knowledge of the psychology of learning, the language teacher often has the uneasy task of opting for a specific conception of language (and consequently a type of linguistic analysis) as there tend to be several often contradictory and irreconcilable proposals.[1] The ordinary language teacher has to rely on the linguist (we must distinguish here between the linguist who is both a textbook writer and a teacher and the teacher who is not a professional linguist) for an exhaustive description of the language to be taught and for the resolution of the linguistic problems of language education. The linguist and ordinary language teacher have apparently different objectives. Some of their interests are not irreconcilable, however; both are interested for example in what educated people would say. But the linguist's task is not confined to the study

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[1] See for example P. W. Davis, Modern Theories of Language (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973).

of the "educated" varieties of language alone. Since language is a social phenomenon, the linguist is also expected to take notice of linguistic differences between social groups[1] in order to help select the language behaviour of particular groups for specified purposes, such as teaching in schools and literacy classes for adults. This assertion assumes that there are neatly circumscribed social groups, and that within each group all the members will behave linguistically in exactly the same way. Indeed, this assumption is fundamental to most traditional linguistic analyses.

We shall attempt, in this chapter, to identify and discuss some of the problems that arise from the existence of "varieties" of language and from the idea of "usage" and "standard" and their implications for foreign language education in West Africa. We believe that a discussion of the question of standard, usage and varieties of language is crucial to the reexamination and definition of the aims of foreign language teaching and the subsequent development of methods to achieve those aims. Our discussion will revolve round French and English, although foreign language education in West Africa involves many more languages such as Spanish, German, Russian, Portuguese, etc.

Language: Aspects of Its Nature and Functions

Most people will agree that language is an instrument of communication. Since the communicative process presupposes the existence of at least two persons possessing a knowledge of a given language, the success of all communication naturally depends on this shared or common

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[1] Cf. L. Bloomfield, Language (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962, Reprint), p. 22.

knowledge. This does not, of course, imply that the verbal repertory of any two members of a given speech community is identical. Indeed, it is a known fact that the linguistic performance of even twins who are members of the same speech community cannot be identical. As Leonard Bloomfield,[1] among several others, has remarked, "Some people are more talented for speech than others: they remember more words and turns of phrase, apply them better to the situation, and combine them in more pleasing style".

Shared linguistic knowledge would seem to be due to the commonness of certain experiences within a given speech community. Charles Bally observes:

> The speaker feels that there exist in his mother tongue frequent and rare words, usual and unusual expressions, that is an indirect proof of the existence of a common language which in a given linguistic group reflects constant forms of human life and of social life.[2]

Every natural language consists of varieties the use of which is conditioned by factors like social class, geographical origin, level of education, relationship between speaker and hearer, topic, setting, etc.[3]

An important characteristic of language, then, is that it is structurally and sociologically multidimensional. This being the case, it seems non-trivial, in seeking to teach a foreign language, to raise

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[1] Language, 1962, p. 45.

[2] C. Bally, Traité de stylistique francaise, Paris, 3e ed., 1951, p. 203. The translation is ours.

[3] Cf. C. A. Ferguson, "Diglossia". Word, 15, 1959, pp. 325-340; L. Bloomfield, op. cit., pp. 51-53; M. Cohen, Le langage: Structure et évolution,(Paris: Editions sociales, 1950); and A. Sauvageot, "Les divers français parlés", Le français dans le monde, 69, déc. 1969, p. 22.

the question of what variety of the language ought to be selected for teaching purposes.

The common language that Bally distinguishes is different from what he describes as "spoken language" or "familiar language". The common language seems to correspond to the variety that all members of a speech community may use in communicating with one another irrespective of their geographical provenience, profession and social class. It seems to be an abstraction from the different varieties of a given language.

In an introduction to his Le langage populaire,[1] H. Bauche distinguishes two types of French: "written", "correct", "classical", "literary", "official" or "academic" French on the one hand, and "spoken", "popular" or "vulgar" French on the other. In his view, popular French is the true French "whether it is pleasant to the ear or not", while literary French is an "artificial" language, "a language of mandarins", "a sort of slang". Opinions vary here, of course. For P. Guiraud,[2] for example, popular French is an autonomous variety of French, with a simple and well-structured system, a system that is infinitely better-structured than that of literary French, while for A. Martinet,[3] popular French is not French. Whatever the case may be, no one recommends popular French or vernacular English as the variety that ought to be taught in West Africa, where the communicative function and educational role of these "traditional"

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[1] H. Bauche, Le langage populaire (Paris: Payot, 1946).

[2] P. Guiraud, "Le système du relatif en français populaire", Langages, 3, sep. 1966, pp. 47-48.

[3] A. Martinet, Le français sans fard (Paris, P.U.F., 1969), p. 94.

foreign languages are very much interwoven and interdependent. Knowing a language implies the appropriate use of the varieties (words, expressions or turns of phrase, etc.) of that language according to contexts or situations. The important notion of appropriateness which we identify with that of usage may be defined only in terms of parameters such as social class, setting, topic, etc. Notice that the Oxford English Dictionary (1961 Reprint: 466-467) defines usage generally as "Habitual use, established custom or practice, customary mode of action, on the part of a number of persons", and linguistic usage as "Established or customary use or employment of language, words, expression, etc.".

It seems obvious, then, that one could empirically identify as many usages as the social structure of any speech community permits. Ultimately, one could elevate this common sense view to the status of a universal, as R. J. Di Pietro does in his "Discovery of Universals in Multilingualism",[1] when he says:

> If a community is socially stratified and there is variability in the language of that community, then some of the variability of language must relate to the social stratification.

Owing to differences in individual speech development, the usage of a group or a number of persons known to belong to a given social class can be made up only of similar uses of the language by individuals of the group concerned. Usages within a given speech community may differ from another only in lexis, or in pronunciation, or in grammar, or in all these respects, since the possibility of communication between individuals of different usage-groups may range from zero to the most delicate

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[1] In J. Alatis (ed.), Georgetown Round Table or Language and Linguistics (Bilingualism and Language Contact), Monograph Series 23, pp. 16-17.

adjustment.

For any usage-group (this is an equivalent term for social class except that we are stressing here the linguistic homogeneity of the class) one can speak of a standard. The search for a standard, or a norm implies the notion of aberrance or deviation and can be satisfactorily encompassed only by delicate and systematic statistical evaluations of the linguistic performances of all individuals identified as belonging to given social classes. In practice, this is not possible; what usually happens, then, is the observation of the linguistic performance of a few representatives of a given social class, the abstraction of common features and the generalisation of such features for the class concerned.[1]

Since using a language well implies some awareness of usage-groups and their characteristic linguistic tendencies, foreign language teaching must take cognizance of this sociological reality of language use and make provision for the acquisition of the varieties or levels of language that may be subsumed under a given foreign language.

Linguists have long maintained that only usage should determine the acceptability of any linguistic expression; however, they do not, as educators, reject such views as "a living culture in one nation (not to speak of one world) must insist on a standard of usage. To prevent debasement and fraud requires vigilance and it implies the right to blame. It is not snobbery that is involved but literacy on its highest plane and that literacy has to be protected from ignorance and sloth".[2]

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[1] Cf. A. Martinet & H. Walter, Dictionnaire de la prononciation francaise dans son usage réel, France-Expansion, 1973.

[2] S. Belasco (ed.), Anthology for Use with a Guide for Teachers in NDEA Language Institutes (Boston: D. C. Health & Co., 1961), p. 24.

The variety of language selected for teaching purposes is usually described as a standard. Such a standard is supposed to be a "neutral" variety of the given language, a variety that is free from regionalisms and idiosyncracies; compared with other varieties, the standard, it is assumed, has the widest currency and enjoys the greatest prestige.[1] The recognition and imposition of a standard variety of any language is indeed a necessary condition for the promotion and preservation of effective widespread communication transcending territorial boundaries. A standard language, as K. W. Deutsch[2] has pertinently observed with respect to European nationalism,

> . . . is not merely a standardized local idiom. It may be regarded rather as a combination of several idioms in that, it is usually a language accepted as a common standard by the speakers of several different dialects. It may be a combination of several different elements of speech, such as the Greek Koine . . . the national standard language is itself the result of economic, cultural, and political cooperation and affiliation.

It would seem that in West Africa as elsewhere educational institutions and mass media of communication have played no small role in ensuring widespread use or at least the diffusion of standard English and standard French. And yet both casual observations and some of the results of English and French language contact researches since the 1950s point to the emergence in West Africa of varieties that are ostensibly different from the "initial" standard varieties.

It has, for example, been observed that:

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[1] Cf. J. Dubois, Grammaire structurale du français: nom et pronom (Paris: Larousse, 1965), p. 5.

[2] "The Trend of European Nationalism: The Language Aspect". In J. Fishman (ed.), Readings in the Sociology of Language (Mouton, 1972), p. 602.

> The variety of English spoken in Nigeria is also notable for a number of idioms such as 'to be on seat', e.g. 'He is not on seat' - 'He is not at his desk', or 'a been - to' used in referring to someone who has been abroad. Finally, there is the use of some expressions which in other varieties of English would be considered as inappropriate.[1]

In 1955, P. D. Strevens had also remarked that there are noticeable differences in the written and spoken forms of English in West Africa:

> Even in the realm of the written language the process of learning is imperfect, however, as reference to any issue of any of those West African newspapers printed in English will confirm. Nevertheless, even if the style is sometimes inappropriate, the product is almost always intelligible. When one considers the spoken language, however, and in particular the question of pronunciation, no such happy generalization can be made.[2]

The problem created by the pronunciation of English in Africa is due, according to Strevens, to the fact that preference for the accents of English varies from one African country to another; the term "standard English" therefore applies only to grammar and vocabulary: "For instance 'RP' (or 'Educated Southern British') is no longer accepted in Ghana, where an 'Educated West African accent' is rapidly emerging; for Kenya, on the other hand, RP is still the preferred model".[3]

The emergence of "African" varieties of English has also been explained in terms of "types of teachers". Strevens, for example, has traced the diverse pronunciations of English in West Africa to the fact

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[1] A. Bamgbose, Linguistics in a Developing Country (An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan on 27 October, 1972), University of Ibadan, p. 13. For a more detailed discussion see "The English Language in Nigeria" in J. Spencer (ed.), The English Language in West Africa (London: Longman, 1971).

[2] P. D. Strevens, Papers in Language and Language Teaching (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 111.

[3] Ibid., p. 106.

of the language being taught by people to whom it is a foreign language:

> The degree of attainment which West Africans reach in English varies from nil to complete mastery. Whatever level an individual may reach, it will have been reached almost exclusively by West Africans who themselves learned from West Africans, and so on, reaching back into the earliest days of organized education in West Africa. At this distant point in time we find that in Ghana at least, the majority of those who taught English were Germans or German-Swiss. There is thus a long tradition of the teaching of English by people to whom English is a foreign language, and in almost all cases in recent years it has been taught by those whose mother tongue is either the same as that of the pupils, or some other West African language, probably from an area not more than a few scores of miles away, and therefore probably related to the language of the pupils.[1]

This situation is not confined to English-speaking West Africa. C. Hagege made similar observations on Cameroonian French (Adamawa) in 1968:

> The teaching of French poses a big problem in Cameroon insofar as it is carried out by native teachers, at least in the great majority of primary schools. These teachers as far as the present generation is concerned are often former pupils of other native teachers: the latter have passed on to their pupils certain usages which had been perpetuated as a result of insufficient schooling and which seem to stem from an erroneous interpretation of what they heard.[2]

At their conference in 1962, Primary School Inspectors in Senegal had also made the following summary observations on teachers and their teaching of French:

- A strong proportion of beginners whose professional training is inadequate
- Absenteeism
- Superficial correction of work

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[1] Papers in Language and Language Teaching, pp. 110-111.

[2] C. Hagege, "A propos du français de l'Adamaoua", La Linguistique, 1968/1, p. 118. The translation is ours.

- Presentation of lessons neglected
- Lack of drill in French: basic mechanisms are not acquired; lack of pronunciation exercises, ignorance or confusion of sounds.[1]

We may remark here that the standard varieties of English and French in Africa would have been the same as those in England and France only if they had begun and continued to be taught exclusively by native speakers who consistently used those standards and in whose speech there never could have been detected the coexistence or interpenetration of subsystems or different varieties of the same language of which the standard is a part.

Indeed, three categories of foreign language teachers may be distinguished:

1. Europeans (including Britons, Americans and Frenchmen) speaking the language (English or French) as a mother tongue; the problem of accentual differences in the case of Americans, Canadians and Britons on the one hand, Frenchmen from different parts of France on the other seems inevitable here.

2. Europeans (including Britons, Americans, Canadians and Frenchmen) speaking the language as a second language or as a foreign language.

3. Blacks (Africans, West Indians and Black Americans) who have acquired the language either as a second or foreign language up to University or Higher School (i.e., Secondary) level.

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[1] A. Thiriet, Conclusions générales (Publication no. 5 of the Dakar Centre for Applied Linguistics, p. D5.) The translation is ours.

However, inasmuch as the success of foreign language acquisition does not depend solely on the teacher but also on other factors such as types of textbooks in use, linguistic aptitude of learners, social environment with all that it implies (e.g., social attitudes to language education, opportunities for using the language outside the classroom, etc.), one may from a common sense or logical viewpoint say that teachers alone cannot be held responsible for the emergence of African varieties of English and French.

It must be noted here that spatial or geographical factors also play an important role in linguistic evolution; apart from such factors, there is what may be called the temporal factor; all natural languages are subject to change whether they are transplanted or not. For language, like other aspects of human behaviour, is time-bound and changes with the society it serves. It is a tool that society adapts to its needs, its moral and intellectual life. English and French even in their countries of origin are today obviously no longer what they were three or four centuries ago. A superficial examination of the writings of a Chaucer or of a Jonathan Swift, of a Rabelais or a Descartes will show that changes have occurred in both languages at several linguistic levels: phonological, mirrored somewhat by the orthography, grammatical and lexical. Since language is forever changing, it seems obvious that none of the subsystems or varieties can remain unaffected, although it is the case that some varieties are less dynamic than others; that is, some are more conservative while others are more innovative.[1] Indeed,

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[1]Cf. for example A. H. Marckwardt, "American and British English", in H. B. Allen (ed.), Teaching English as a Second Language: A Book of Readings (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1965), pp. 239-247.

the educated variety usually designated as the standard is also subject to linguistic change (cf. chapter 2).

The emergence of West African varieties of English and French is due to a complex of factors:

(a) the transplantation or export of varieties of English and French and the use of such varieties by individuals from different linguistic communities;

(b) difference of local realities or needs; difference of topography, physical surroundings, etc.[1]

English in America and French in Canada are illustrative examples of what could happen to languages that have been transplanted and have had to be used by linguistically heterogeneous communities. And yet recognition has often not been readily accorded to the existence or possible emergence of different varieties of languages outside their countries of origin. Thus in a letter on "Canadian-French" as far back as 1935, G. Lalonde had denied the existence of such a variety of French (out of patriotism?):

> . . . it should be stressed that there is no such language as "Canadian-French". French spoken in the Province of Quebec differs from Standard French speech in colloquialisms, in the use of Old French terms and in special intonations, etc., but it is French, not a "dialect" or a "patois".
>
> There is no more difference between the French of France and the French spoken in Quebec Province than there is between the English spoken in the United States and in Great Britain. There is as much difference between the English spoken in Boston, in the Southern States or in Western sections of the United States, or between that of Northern and Southern England, as there is between the French spoken in Quebec Province and French spoken in Central France, Southern France (for instance, Marseille) or Northern France (Normandy, Brittany, etc.). [. . .] It is of course only fair to state

[1] Cf. E. Sapir, "Language and Environment", The American Anthropologist, Vol. 14, 1914 (The Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series in the Social Sciences A-199), pp. 226-242).

> that in Quebec the spoken language differs in different sections. As in other countries, the language spoken by the illiterate peasant is not the same as that spoken by the better educated city-dwellers, with business or legal occupations, etc.[1]

Whereas R. Mauny had made the following observation in 1952 on the French used by educated French West Africans:

> The language used in French West Africa by Europeans and the African elite among themselves (although the African elite has preserved everywhere the use of the mother tongue) is French. It is neither a patois like the "Cagayous" of Algeria nor a creole language deforming more or less the speech of the metropolis like the French of the West Indies.[2]

J. P. Vonrospach discovered in 1969 (that is, 17 years later) that a variety of French described as "popular" was widely used by both educated and uneducated people in the Ivory Coast. This variety had its own phonological, grammatical and lexical systems: "Since it is spoken also by intellectuals under certain circumstances, we probably have to do with a 'familiar' language; it seems to be a substitute for vernacular languages in social situations where the vernacular cannot be used".[3]

From these observations it seems clear that a speaker may know and use more than one variety of a given language. There is need therefore for linguists to observe the circumstances or situations in which varieties of language are used; that is, if it is maintained that there can be a strict separation and use of language varieties and a clear

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[1] H. G. Lalonde, "Canadian-French" (Communication), The Modern Language Journal, vol. XX, No. 1, Oct. 1935, p. 96.

[2] R. Mauny, Glossaire des expressions et termes locaux employés dans l'Ouest African (Dakar, IFAN, 1952), p. 7. The translation is ours.

[3] J. P. Vonrospach, "Le français populaire d'Abidjan", Proceedings of the 8th West African Languages Congress (Abidjan, 1969), pp. 36-37. The translation is ours.

definition of the circumstances without possible blurring of the borders between those varieties.

In seeking to characterize African varieties of English and French objectively, the following questions seem to merit consideration:

(1) What are the structural differences between the types of English and French used in West Africa and the standard variety (being taught)?

(2) Are there any similarities between such African varieties and other varieties including those used by Englishmen and Frenchmen?

(3) Do African varieties coexist with a standard identifiable with standard English or standard French?

(4) Do educated Africans "control" the standard variety along with other varieties, popular (or pidgin), etc.? If so, what are the conditions of their use?

Linguists have generally tended to restrict their attention to the educated varieties of language, usually identified as standards. Connected with the notion of standard is the widespread but mistaken belief that the language of one region is better than the language of another. Grittner relates an interesting personal experience in his discussion of the notion of standard:

> During a study tour of German schools and universities, the author and four other educators from the United States were somewhat chagrined to learn that the language of educated Americans was considered 'substandard' by many Germans. In one German high school, the head of the University system from a western State of U.S. was asked to read a story about Buffalo Bill to an English class. He had hardly begun to read when the students broke out laughing. The German youngsters had been indoctrinated to believe that British 'received English' (similar to Oxfordian English) was the

> only 'good' English. The sudden shock of hearing an important scholarly man 'mispronouncing' his As startled and amused the German teenagers.[1]

In our own research, we have made comparable observations from attitudes of African speakers of French to the types of French spoken by other Africans from different countries. In the course of fieldwork in 1968, we noted that some of our Ivorian informants believed that Ivorians spoke 'better' than other French-speaking West Africans except perhaps Malians, while some of our Senegalese French-speaking students in Nigeria were convinced that Senegalese generally spoke 'better' than other French-speaking West Africans. The linguist, of course, rejects such insular attitudes toward the way people speak a language, his task being that of describing and not prescribing. The aim of the foreign language teacher is to enable the learner to acquire either a reading knowledge of the language in question, or the ability to understand and produce in speech as well as in writing correct and appropriate utterances in the language. The language skill aimed at may therefore differ from institution to institution or from one group to another. Thus, in an introductory tract on a beginner's course in French, one course writer in America defines a minimum competence in French as follows:

- "the ability to read general French prose (newspapers, magazines, contemporary literature, material in one's field of interest);
- knowledge about French-speaking peoples and their everyday culture;
- knowledge of the basic structure of the French language;
- listening comprehension ability sufficient to enable one to get the 'gist' of a news broadcast, a lecture, or to understand French speakers when they speak slowly;
- speaking proficiency sufficient for one to get around in a French-speaking country (greetings, asking for directions, giving basic information about one's self)."

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[1] F. M. Grittner, Teaching Foreign Languages (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 40.

The ultimate goal of foreign language teaching like French in English-speaking West Africa or English in French-speaking West Africa is to help learners acquire not only a speaking knowledge but also a knowledge of the culture of the country to which the language belongs through its literature.[1] Foreign language teaching is thus conceived of as the teaching of a foreign culture. Note that the aims of French language teaching in anglophone West Africa as formulated by C.M.B. Brann are different only in the specification of the components:

> What we have settled for is French for understanding, information and communication. As in the O-level examinations, the language skills are the basis of the course. . . . Communication, whether by word of mouth or by letter, is the other aim of the course which can be powerfully motivated by the exchange of pupils and of correspondence. Understanding is the main object of the civilisation course. . . .[2]

Since spoken language and literary language are not the same and in fact involve different usages, this implies exposing the foreign language student to different usages (registers or levels of language). The problem that this creates for the foreigner is how to retain and use words and structures belonging to different usages appropriately in novel circumstances.

This pedagogical or organisational difficulty leads to the production in French, for example, of sentences like the following:

"La foule bigarrée. . . ."

"Il se rend dans son atelier."

"Les femmes munies de leurs paniers. . . ."[3]

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[1]Cf. U.N.E.S.C.O. publication No. 267. Conference Internationale d'instruction publique (Paris, 1964).

[2]C.M.B. Brann, "The New West African School Certificate/G.C.E. Advanced Level French Syllabus", Le Français au Nigeria, Vol. 7, No. 1, avril 1972, pp. 7-17.

[3]These examples are taken from Le français des élèves de Côte

The use of the underlined words by primary school pupils in written composition is considered inappropriate.

To expect the foreign student to speak English or French like a native implies not only the ability to use all the distinctive phonetic and phonological features of these languages such as stress, rhythm and intonation, but also the ability to produce meaningful, grammatical and socially acceptable sound sequences. Note that in 1942 Bloomfield[1] had specified the terminal objectives of foreign language teaching as follows: "A command of the spoken forms of the language. This command includes the ability to speak the language fluently, accurately, and with an acceptable approximation to native pronunciation."

We shall not attempt to discuss the reasonableness of such a proposal. We would simply point out that there seem to be aspects of any given language that may be considered by native speakers to be more characteristic of the language, and that such aspects seem to be linked up with the question of intelligibility.

A. Martinet, discussing the need for a French Pronouncing Dictionary, for example, makes the following observation:

> Aucun "accent" reconnu comme français ne saurait déclasser personne, pourvu qu'il ait, par frottement, perdu de son agressivité; qu'il roule les r ou qu'il grasseye, qu'il distingue un de in ou qu'il les confonde, qu'il fasse ou non sentir certains e "muets" un Français sera toujours "distingué", si sa syntaxe est impeccable et s'il choisit immanquablement le mot juste.[2]

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d'Ivoire: III - Les déformations du vocabulaire (cyclostyled), Institut de Linguistique Appliquée, Université d'Abidjan, no date. [translation: "the variegated/motley crowd", "He proceeds to his workshop", "women supplied/provided with their baskets"].

[1] L. Bloomfield, Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages (Baltimore, 1942).

[2] A. Martinet, Le français sans fard (Paris: P.U.F., 1969), p. 124.

The crucial question here is: "What is a recognized French accent?" We know that the features enumerated by André Martinet are generally correlated with speech styles or "dialects": the uvular rolled or fricative ʁ is considered to characterize "Parisian" French, while lingual rolled r is a feature of "provincial" speech. At any rate, the distinction is phonetic rather than phonemic; the distinction un/in on the other hand constitutes one of the weak points of French phonology: most speakers do not consistently distinguish the two sounds as Martinet points out. Frequent pronunciation of mute e's where they are best left out may also characterize one's speech as "archaic" (cf. R. A. Hall, Structural Sketch 1: French (Baltimore, 1948). Thus, we have here features whose "functional load" is slight or nil. Martinet's view would seem to imply that, in contrast to the grammar and lexicon, the pronunciation of French is less important. However, Martinet makes an important exception for francophones, not Frenchmen:

> Ceci ne veut pas dire qu'il faille renoncer à décrire la prononciation française. Il faut le faire, sinon pour les Français eux-mêmes qui, jusqu'ici ne se posent guère de questions, du moins pour les francophones, moins sûrs d'eux-mêmes, de Belgique, du Canada et d'ailleurs, et bien entendu, pour tous ceux qui apprennent le français comme langue seconde.[1]

If, however, French pronunciation must be taught along with the grammar and vocabulary, what are the aspects that need to be taught, assuming that we want foreign learners to be able to communicate intelligibly with Frenchmen and francophones alike? What are the pedagogical norms that must be prescribed?

Since it seems obvious that all the varieties of a language cannot

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[1] Le français sans fard, p. 124.

be taught in three, five or even seven years, there must needs be selection. But in order that the need to be selective may not hamper or prevent eventual acquisition of "near native" linguistic competence, the pedagogical norms prescribed must not only reflect present day usage, which for practical reasons may be drawn from a variety of the language, but also recognize and bring to the awareness of the learner all other usages that exist within the language and are known by native speakers.

CHAPTER 2

SCIENTIFIC DESCRIPTIONS OF SPEECH PHENOMENA AND THE PROBLEM OF LINGUISTIC NORM SPECIFICATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The raw data with which the linguist is concerned are the spontaneous, uncontrolled or unedited realisations by speakers of given natural languages. These are sounds. Confronted with such data, the linguist endeavours to determine the underlying "systems" and "structures".

In order to make scientific statements about the extremely complex interlocking systems that language is, the linguist cuts up his subject-matter procedurally and concentrates his attention on a part at any one time. The number of linguistic levels of course varies from linguist to linguist depending on the theory of language adopted, but the majority of linguists generally recognise three levels: the phonological, grammatical (morphological and syntactic) and lexical. A fundamental assumption of all linguistic analysis is that certain features are relevant while others are not. At the phonological level, the basic assumption is that the sounds of a given language are automatically and unconsciously organised into small structural units in the mind of native speakers.[1] These units called 'phonemes' are for some linguists the only units capable of conveying information and are universal. For others like Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, however, human beings speak and

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[1]Cf. K. L. Pike, Phonemics: A Technique for Reducing Languages to Writing (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1947, 9th Printing, 1964), p. 57.

hear in terms of distinctive features which are also universal, and are arranged in a hierarchical order. Compared with phonemes, sounds are useless in human communication because the concept of continuum involved in speech production implies a series of ever-changing events where the same configuration never recurs. A requirement of phonemic analysis (which cannot be carried out without a set of premises) is consequently to group sounds that share characteristics and are not contrastive as constituting a single phoneme. The notion of the phoneme which is a prime category for the structuralist varies from one linguist to another: definitions described as "mentalistic" or "psychological", "physical", "functional" and "abstract" abound in the literature and attest to the "non-uniqueness of the phoneme". The general impression, however, is that all structuralists (the term 'structuralist' is used here in its non-technical sense and applies to glossematicians and tagmemicists among others) agree at least on the use of the criterion of commutation or complementary distribution as the only sure means of phonemicising.

To arrive at the phonemic inventory of a given language, the structuralist has often had to make decisions on the basis of three criteria:

1. The distribution of sounds;

2. The functional load of given contrasts within the system or correlative sets;

3. The evolutionary tendencies of the language.

If procedurally the linguist distinguishes between phonology and morphology, the minimum unit with which he operates at both levels is the word.

As in the case of the "phoneme", linguists are not altogether

agreed on the definition of the "morpheme", although it is accepted by most as a basic unit at the morphological level.

While admitting that no exact definition of the morpheme appears possible, Gleason,[1] for example, proposes the following characterization: "the smallest unit which is grammatically pertinent"; "the smallest meaningful unit".

Bloomfield[2] defines it as: "a linguistic form which bears no partial phonetic-semantic resemblance to any other form".

While Bolinger[3] suggests the following definition: ". . . a least element that can enter into new combinations. . . a formative, residue or component".

The major difference between the "phoneme" and the "morpheme" seems to be generally formulated in terms of "meaning". While the phoneme, distinguished by the phonetic similarity of its members (allophones) and by its contrastive distribution with other phonemes of the language, has no meaning but a "signifying function," the morpheme with phonemes as its ultimate constituents has meaning.[4]

Defined as "the smallest meaningful unit", the term "morpheme" would seem to apply to any expression feature that can be correlated

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[1] H. A. Gleason, Jr., An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), pp. 52-53.

[2] L. Bloomfield, Language, p. 161.

[3] D. L. Bolinger, "On Defining the Morpheme", Word, Vol. 4, 1948.

[4] Cf. H. A. Gleason, An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics, p. 11.

with a part of the content structure of a given language. It is thus that features such as those expressing "gender" and "number" differences and "word order" are considered as "morphemic".

The complex nature of the morpheme has made it not only necessary to distinguish between two types of morpheme: free and bound, but also to recognize types of meaning: grammatical (or structural) and lexical.

Another "primary" unit of grammatical analysis recognised by linguists is the word. Just as the morpheme and phoneme are related in the sense that the latter is the ultimate constituent of the former so are the morpheme and the word. Defined as a "form which may be uttered alone (with meaning) but cannot be analysed into parts that may (all of them) be uttered alone (with meaning)",[1] a word many correspond to either a free morpheme, or a combination of a free morpheme and one or more bound morphemes, or of only bound morphemes. Thus, "the total linguistic meaning of any utterance consists of the lexical meanings of the separate words plus structural meanings".

Now, a linguistic description may be based on systematically elicited monolinqual or bilingual speech events; that is, on empirical research by the linguist himself or by another; it may also be based on "subjective impressionism"; that is, on casual, unrecorded and introspective observations; that is, on what some call "personal experience", or it may be a mixture of all of these.

The most significant contribution of linguistics to foreign language teaching has been concerned with pointing out the linguistic problems that are likely to hamper the learning process by means of a

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[1] L. Bloomfield, "A Set of Postulates for the Science of Language", in S. Saporta (ed.), Psycholinguistics (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 28.

point-by-point comparison between the mother tongue of the learner and the language to be learned using the descriptive units briefly presented earlier; viz., the phoneme, morpheme and word. Since there still remain numerous theoretical problems connected with the phoneme, morpheme and word, it seems inevitable that such problems should have repercussions in the field of foreign language teaching analysis. We shall discuss in this chapter, some of these problems as they appear in scientific descriptions of French from the standpoint of how they relate to empirical studies on French as a foreign language.

It has for a long time been known that languages in contact exert some influence on one another; such influence has generally been described in terms of "borrowing" and "interference". Thus, E. Haugen observes that:

> . . . every speaker attempts to reproduce previously learned linguistic patterns in an effort to cope with new linguistic situations. Among the patterns he may learn are those of a language different from his own. If he reproduces new linguistic patterns, not in the context of the language in which he learned them but in the context of another, he may be said to have borrowed them from one language into another.[1]

Distinguishing between "borrowing" and "interference" in 1956, perhaps under the influence of Uriel Weinreich (1953),[2] E. Haugen characterized interference in the following terms:

> In practice, interference takes many forms, described in the literature as 'foreign accent', 'language mixture', 'unidiomatic expressions', 'loanwords', 'translation loans', 'semantic borrowing', and the like. It may be wholly individual or it may have gained currency that it becomes the property of a whole speech area.[3]

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[1] E. Haugen, "The Analysis of Linguistic Borrowing", Language, 26, 1950, p. 212.

[2] U. Weinreich, Languages in Contact (Houton & Co., 1953, 4th Printing, 1966).

[3] E. Haugen, Bilingualism in the Americas: A Bibliography and Research Guide (Alabama: American Dialect Society, 1956, 2nd Printing, 1964) p. 12.

Interference occurs because the speaker; that is, the "bilingual", has some knowledge of a foreign language and consciously or unconsciously adopts features from it. The more general view of interference is that the phonetic, grammatical and lexical peculiarities of the new language are usually perceived in terms of the norms of the mother tongue or the first language acquired.

However, just as the natural aptitude for learning one's mother tongue varies from child to child, so does the aptitude for learning new languages in both children and adults. Accordingly, interference will vary in extent from individual to individual. Haugen[1] has pertinently observed that: "In any population that has been exposed to a second language there will be differences in skill which are purely individual".

Interference as an individual phenomenon will vary from one style to another, from one code to the next as, for example, from the written to the spoken language, and from one context to the next.[2]

Theoreticians of bilingualism and its attendant "undesirable" linguistic effect, interference, agree that interference can be determined by a point-by-point comparison of the two languages in contact. Mackey, for example, observes that the identification of interference "depends on an accurate and complete description of the two languages involved and an analysis of the differences between them".[3]

Weinreich, who in a more comprehensive study on bilingualism

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[1] Bilingualism in the Americas. . . (cf. note 3, p. 24), p. 71.

[2] W. Mackey, "The Description of Bilingualism", Canadian Journal of Linguistics (RCL), 7, 2, 1962, p. 69.

[3] "The Description of Bilingualism", p. 73.

had observed that "the bulk of the phonemic system, a large part of the morphology and syntax and some areas of the vocabulary"[1] may be affected by interference, also states that "if the phonic or grammatical systems of the two languages are compared and their differences delineated, one ordinarily has a list of the potential forms of interference in the given contact situation".[2]

Such formulations indeed suggest the indispensability of contrastive analysis in purposeful foreign language education.

> The most effective materials, [writes C. C. Fries[3]], are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.

Robert Lado writes in support of contrastive analysis in the following way:

> A practical confirmation of the validity of our assumption (i.e. that the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning lies in the comparison between native and foreign languages) has come from the work of linguists who study the effect of close contact between languages in bilingual situations. They report that many linguistic distortions heard among bilinguals correspond to describable differences in the languages involved.[4]

Indeed, there is such overwhelming evidence of interference in the speech of bilinguals from different parts of the world that only the linguistically untrained or unlettered would deny the existence or

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[1] U. Weinreich, Languages in Contact, p. 1.

[2] Ibid., p. 3.

[3] C. C. Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1945), p. 9.

[4] R. Lado, Linguistics across Cultures: Applied Linguistics for Language Teachers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), p. 1.

possibility of this phenomenon in multilingual communities or in the speech of the non-native user of any language.

Monika Kehoe,[1] writing about the "foreign student in North America", for example, says:

> The professor supervising the M.A. thesis complains that, unless he rewrites the paper himself, it makes no sense. The organization of the material is somehow just "off". He is dismayed to find that the candidate who speaks good English, has been in North America several years, seems to understand the lectures, and has obviously good control of the spoken language, still cannot develop a logical, written paragraph.

S. U. Philips[2] also makes the following observation about Warm Springs Indian children in Central Oregon: "The dialect of English which they speak, however, is not the standard English of their teachers, but one which in some respects of grammar and phonology shows influence from the Indian languages spoken on the reservation".

The fact that interference may occur also in the speech of monolinguals, and can even be detected by a wholly unsophisticated monolingual speaker of the language (Weinreich has rightly observed that interference can occur between dialects of the same language) suggests that interference is a universal linguistic phenomenon. What has been of greater interest to linguists, however, is the incidence of this phenomenon on different languages in contact. We shall in the next chapter examine speech events by foreign users of French mainly in West Africa in an

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[1]M. Kehoe, "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages", in M. Kehoe (ed.), Applied Linguistics: A Survey for Language Teachers (New York: Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 119.

[2]S. U. Philips, "Acquisition of Rules for Appropriate Speech Usage", in J. Alatis (ed.), Georgetown Round Table on Languages and Linguistics (Bilingualism and Language Contact) Monograph Series 23, p. 18.

attempt to identify some of the problems peculiar to them.

Granted at this juncture that interference is real, the questions which we would like to examine now are:

1. What are the possibilities and limitations of contrastive analyses as ways of identifying potential areas of interference in foreign language education?

2. How are interference phenomena identified?

Contrastive Analysis: Possibilities and Limitations

Although students of bilingualism and interference agree that areas of interference between languages in contact can be determined by comparing the languages concerned, views on what actual speech phenomena are to be described as "interlingual" are varied; this is due principally to the fact that the notion of interference varies from linguist to linguist. For some linguists there is the need to distinguish between interference in language and in speech (e.g., Weinreich, 1953, and Mackey, 1970), while for others the two types seem to be confused or indistinguishable.

Whatever the case may be, the use of contrastive analyses as a means of determining interference has been rather limited at least in Africa for a number of reasons: quite often complete descriptions of individual languages in contact are either lacking; or where they are available descriptions of the languages are not easily comparable due to differences in the linguistic theories underlying those descriptions. This difficulty, coupled with the fact that complete descriptions of languages can be made only over long periods of time, has provided justification for what has come to be known as "Error Analysis" and the

restriction of attention to either the phonology or the grammar of the language in contact.

Indeed, the practicality and utility of contrastive analyses come up against numerous difficulties in a number of well-defined situations. For example, in multilingual countries like Nigeria and Ghana (and all West African countries are multilingual), the analyst needs to compare not only English and French, since English though an official language is not "natively spoken" by the majority, but also French, as a foreign language, and forty or more Nigerian or Ghanaian languages, which are potentially in contact with French.

It seems that contrastive analyses may be more easily undertaken in fairly homogeneous linguistic communities or countries with only one or two languages; in other words, contrastive analyses can be carried out with less difficulty and without much loss of time in multilingual countries only by teams of linguists using the same linguistic theory.

It is also doubtful whether the language course designer or textbook writer can incorporate all relevant linguistic information concerning as many as forty languages in a single book without sacrificing simplicity in presentation which is necessary for effective learning as well as teaching.

It is worth remarking here that, although the idea of "regionalising" foreign language instruction in Africa on the grounds that "there is greater uniformity among languages of the same linguistic area in Black Africa than in Europe"[1] seems attractive, it unduly minimizes the

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[1]Cf. J. P. Makouta-Mboukou, Le français en Afrique noire (Histoire et méthodes de l'enseignement du français en Afrique noire)(Paris: Bordas, 1973), p. 10.

difficulty that multilingualism poses for contrastive analyses. Regionalised instruction of foreign languages will, of course, depend for its success on detailed typological studies of African languages. Several mother tongues can be referred to in foreign language teaching in multilingual situations in a non-trivial way only where there are far-reaching structural parallels (e.g., phonological, grammatical and lexical) among those languages. But even here the problem of interference or substratum influence cannot be completely ignored. Foreign language instruction depends for its success partly on good linguistic descriptions. A good linguistic description to our mind is one that, in addition to being simple and comprehensive, points out clearly what distinguishes the language from all others. This is to say that in foreign language teaching the differences rather than similarities among languages are of greater consequence.

The assumption of contrastive linguistics does not seem to have been supported unequivocally by the facts. H. F. Buteau[1] concludes a study on French as a second language in these terms:

> The general findings of this summary error-survey seem to indicate that the French sentences that correspond literally to their English equivalents are not necessarily the easiest to learn, that the probability of errors could not be assessed only from the degree of divergence of the two linguistic structures, and consequently other factors of difficulty must be hypothesized.

Now, to say, for example, on the basis of contrastive analysis, that an African student will have difficulties with gender in French because his mother tongue does not possess grammatical gender (that is, because gender

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[1] Magdelhayne F. Buteau, "Students' Errors and The Learning of French as a Second Language - A Pilot Survey", IRAL VIII/2, 1970, pp. 133-145 (p. 139).

is lexical in his language) or that he will confuse French pronouns because his own language has only one as against eight in French has only a predictive value which may or may not be confirmed in actual performance, Prediction and the materialization of a prediction are obviously different, being dependent on different conditions. In this particular case, the prediction is "language dependent", while its validation depends on the "individual" with the variability in linguistic aptitude (competence and performance) that the term implies.

If other factors of difficulty are to be hypothesized in addition to those arising from differences in linguistic structure, then the search must be in the areas that we may for want of better terms call the psychophysiological and sociological bases of language acquisition. Contrastive analysis may acquire another salutary dimension if practitioners recognise among other things that the internal regularities as well as irregularities of structure in any language may also be generative of interference.[1] For language learning involves things like analogy and generalisation.

While, unlike A. C. Sciarone,[2] we do recognise that contrastive analysis has made and can still make important contributions to foreign language teaching, we also believe that we need to attempt to specify an additional set of causes of "learners' errors". For, as William Mackey[3]

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[1]Cf. E. N. Kwofie, The Grammar of Spoken Languages in the Ivory Coast: A Study in Second Language Acquisition (Grossen-Linden, Hoffmann Verlag, 1976).

[2]A. C. Sciarone, "Contrastive Analysis: Possibilities and Limitations", IRAL, Vol. VIII/2, May 1970.

[3]W. F. Mackey, Language Teaching Analysis (London: Longmans, 1965), pp. 111-112.

observed rightly a decade or so ago, the first language of the learner is not the only influence on second language learning.

The Identification of Linguistic Interference: The Problem of Norm Specification

The problem of linguistic norm specification is indeed linked up with the problem of standard. Specifying the norm of a given language implies a detailed description of the phonology (phones and their distribution, intonation or pitch patterns), grammar and vocabulary of the language (and dialects) available to the monolingual speaker; for the bilingual (or multilingual) this implies a description of all languages available to him. The problem of norm specification is essentially a general linguistic problem. If an ordinary native speaker of a language can be considered to possess mastery of his language, this must imply a knowledge of registers or style levels: the colloquial or informal, formal (literary), or educated, etc., whether he uses them or not; that is, a knowledge of all elements of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary: structural and lexical variants, insofar as communicative competence implies, among other things, the recognition and adequate interpretation of speech events by others. Specifying the norm of a given language must therefore imply the adequate description of linguistic elements used by members of the speech community.

Judging from the variability of linguistic performance (and competence), and linguistic variation is a sociolinguistic fact, we may legitimately speak of several norms with regard to both monolingual and bilingual speech communities or individuals. The monolingual speaker of a "socially stratified" language may possess some or all of the socially

distinguishable norms: an educated norm, and an uneducated or colloquial norm, for example, among several others. To specify any of such norms we need to have elicited or assembled the speech events of people manifestly seen to belong to groups whose language can be described according to the labels adopted. It is only the recurrent and majority features of the speech events examined that can be properly considered as normal or as constituting the norm of the language. Apparently, comparisons between the speech events of different people will reveal that speakers have their individual norms. Just as standards of pronunciation can be identified so can standards of grammar and vocabulary. However, whether an individual's norms can be rigorously isolated is a question that needs to be further investigated. It seems clear, however, from some of the reported researches on bilingualism that, if topic, speaker and setting are common variables that may be correlated with linguistic form, the bilingual may nonetheless change roles sometimes in the middle of a sentence; in other words, it would seem futile or impossible to predict the occurrence of either language A or language B items in the utterances of a bilingual.

An individual's usage may consequently be best described in terms of its own structure and functional load. And if one must speak of interference in a bilingual situation, then it becomes pertinent to distinguish between the individual whose speech A is always affected by another speech B and the individual whose speech A is only occasionally so affected. Where there is a constant overlap between A and B or influence from B on A in the speech of people using A and B, then one must rather speak of the influence having become part of the norm.

William Mackey[1] has suggested on the basis of the results of careful research on French-English bilingualism that there is need to distinguish between interference and integration. Notice here, by the way, that integration is not strictly the same as borrowing. Integration applies to linguistic elements which have passed into the code of the bilingual community as a whole. Although the question of determining the integration of linguistic elements belongs properly to diachronic linguistics, its relevance to foreign language teaching analysis, which belongs to synchrony, seems obvious. Bilinguals may in speaking with other bilinguals play games with their languages; it is also the case that a usage which may seem to the monolingual speaker of one of two languages in contact to be the result of interference may have actually become part of the repertoire of bilinguals. This is to say that unless we have previously established by "availability tests" what linguistic elements are available to given bilinguals, it becomes unscientific to speak of interference in the speech of the bilinguals.

Some forms adopted from a language B by speakers of a language A become so current in the course of time that they end up by losing their cultural motivation, or getting extended or changed in meaning. Thus, the English words brother, family, sister, home, borrow, among several others, have acquired meanings that would appear abnormal to Englishmen. In terms of standard British usage, such uses would be abnormal or peculiar but they may turn out to be normal on examination within definable West African usages. To specify what is normal in West African English, one

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[1]"Interference, Integration and the Synchronic Fallacy", Georgetown Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics, 1970, 23: 195-223.

must take into account those uses made of the language by West African speakers; in the same order of ideas, one cannot describe West African French usages without first identifying local norms.

If the idea of standard, of norm is a complex one, that of identifying linguistic interference partakes of this complexity.[1]

The justification for referring to a given norm associated with a group of monolingual speakers in general attempts to identify interference phenomena in the bilingual's speech resides largely in the fact that some of the bilingual's utterances are isomorphous with utterances made by monolingual speakers.

We shall conclude our discussion of the problem of linguistic norm specification with an illustration both from personal research and from the researches of French phoneticians and phonologists in a given field.

In 1973, we undertook a small-scale research in French phonology. Our informant, a native of Toulousse, France, a mother of one and married to an Englishman, was at the time preparing a doctorate degree in French literature in an American University. She had regularly, as a native speaker of French, prepared tapes under supervision, of course, for language laboratory exercises for American undergraduates of French. The interview which took place at the informant's home, therefore in familiar surroundings, was recorded on tape. After allowing the informant to talk for a few minutes in what may be described as a "directed conversation",

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[1] We have avoided a more detailed examination of the problem of norm specification for the good reason that that would do no more than reduplicate efforts made by various scholars in L. G. Kelly (ed.), Description and Measurement of Bilingualism (The University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 122-173.

we asked her to read an already prepared questionnaire involving the pronunciation of the underlisted sequences among several others. The questionnaire compiled by Albert Valdman[1] was intended to test phonemic contrasts usually recognized in traditional descriptive works on French phonology. The order of the sequences here is not necessarily the same as that of the questionnaire.

Polie/pôlie, pré/prêt, je l'essaie/ je laissai/ je laissais, c'était/été, prendrai/prendrais, épée/épais, résonner/raisonner.

- Nous reprendrons après une courte pause.
- Montre-moi ta paume/ montre-moi ta pomme.
- Il m'a parlé de ce prêt/ il m'a parlé de ce pré.

After a careful transcription of the tape and numerous counter-checks, we came to the conclusion that: "The informant's speech is characterized by the frequent occurrence of [ɳ] in words like maison, autant, ans, occasion, and of [e] in words like français, est, etc. in comparison with another informant who comes from the Paris area".

Abstracting away from the numerous descriptive works on French phonology (cf., for example, H. Sten, 1966, Manuel de phonétique française, B. Malmberg, 1969, Phonétique française, G. Straka, 1952, "La prononciation parisienne, ses divers aspects et ses traits généraux"), we observed with respect to the contrast e/ɛ that [e] occurred frequently and consistently in open syllable except in the pairs: pré/prêt, prendrai/prendrais, résonner/raisonner. It is impossible in these words to talk of the effect of syllable structure (notice that French descriptive linguists make use

[1]Albert Valdman is Professor in the Department of French and Italian at Indiana University, U.S.A.

of this criterion) where the pronunciation seemed to be idiosyncratic in the sense that it was bound up with specific words. The words pré and prêt were, however, distinguished by the informant when they were presented in a longer written sequence: il m'a parlé de ce prêt/ il m'a parlé de ce pré; pré received a slightly close pronunciation while prêt was slightly open. The difference was clearly perceptible. The same treatment was given to the pair polie/pôlie. While polie was pronounced with a really tense and rounded [o], pôlie was pronounced with a slightly open vowel sound identifiable with [ɔ]. It was not clear whether the spelling exerted some influence or not in this connection.

Another observation is that our informant pronounced donné in several instances with the sound [o] where standard French requires [ɔ]. Although it is possible that in one particular case the general phonetic environment influenced her pronunciation of donné as [done]: this word co-occurred with rose in the same sentence: il lui a donné une rose, the other occurrences cannot be explained away in the same way.

On the basis of scientific descriptions of French phonology, the most plausible conclusion to draw from the fact that our native French informant pronounced [e] in paraît, laissai/laissais among others in the reading part of the interview but [ɛ] in prendrai/prendrais and anglais with both [e] and [ɛ] is that there seems to be a convergence of two systems in our informant's speech.

If one can say that the informant has by her education and mobility acquired a standard French pronunciation, this standard certainly coexists with other features that are not strictly those of standard French as described in scientific phonological descriptions

of French.

We present in illustration of some of our observations a phonetic transcription of part of the answer to the investigator's question:

Question: J'aimerais savoir si eh vous avez jamais pensé à la façon dont vous allez apprendre disons le français à vos enfants.

Response: [ə ʒə pãskɸ pʋ lə mõmã etã done kənu vivõ ozetazyni ə lə pRɔblɛm se pʋ nu dpaRle frãse laply posib a la mezɔ̃ŋ dəfasɔ̃ a'skə nɔtR ãfãŋe lokazjõ dãtãdRə lə fRãse otãŋ kəlãglɛ paRskə lɛ̃flyãs dəlãgle e tRɛ gRãd alɛkstɛRjœ:R avɛk lezəlɛv a lekɔl e avɛk œ . . lezotR^{ə} pɛRsɔn kənu RãkõtRõ]

(Note õ is a close nasal vowel; ɔ̃ is slightly open.)

We would like to suggest as one of the implications of empirical studies such as the one summarily reported here that the non-systematic distribution of sounds or the increasing confusion of sounds or the tendency among native speakers not to distinguish sounds presented in traditional linguistic descriptions as phonemic or distinctive and the choice of dialect are factors that are bound to affect not only new linguistic descriptions, but also linguistic norm specification and ultimately the pedagogical norm. Increasing confusion of initially different sounds is a clear indication of linguistic evolution (or phonemic merger) and that cannot be independent of a scientific description of the language in which the confusion occurs. It is for this reason that we consider unacceptable an assertion made by H. Sten (1966); namely, that the foreign language student must not, for example, imitate Frenchmen who do not distinguish between [ɛ̃] and [œ̃]. What if the foreign language student's teachers are among those who "souvent par manque d'habitude

. . . ne se rendent pas compte de la distinction" or, if he has been exposed to a variety of French in which the distinction is not consistently maintained (cf. H. Walter, La dynamique des phonèmes dans le lexique français contemporain, 1976: 319-338 for a discussion of this particular problem)?

There is also a problem that arises from the multiplicity of linguistic descriptions: faced with numerous descriptions of the same language or dialects of the same language, the researcher who is interested in the study of the linguistic effects of bilingualism has the uneasy task of deciding what elements to retain as norms. What, for example, are the options that phonological descriptions of French offer?

While R. A. Hall, Jr. (1948) lists for standard French 12 vowel phonemes including /ə/, K. Togeby (1965), 10, G. L. Trager (1952) and G. Gougenheim (1935) both suggest 11 with the former saying that it is possible to reduce the inventory to 8.[1] In contrast to Trager and Hall, Gougenheim considers [a] and [œ] as variants. If, on the other hand, one referred to other varieties of French such as Southern French, one would find a list of only 7 phonemes.

What are the reasons for the multiplicity of solutions to descriptive problems in French phonology?

The most obvious reason which we will explore in detail with regard to mute e is that investigators or interested linguists have not always been concerned with the same problems and have therefore not asked the same questions or utilised the same type of corpus. Since no two speakers of a language speak in exactly the same way, and since sub-linguistic

[1] For bibliographical details of works see references further on.

communities do not necessarily use the same sounds of the language in the same way, we may reasonably expect differences not only in the texts analysed by investigators but also in their interpretation which depends largely on their theoretical orientations.

For a comprehensive and objective analysis of both monolingual and bilingual speech phenomena it would seem imperative that investigators work with the same parameters if possible and use the same types of corpus.

Mute e in the Description of French: An Illustration of the Problem of Linguistic Norm Specification

Mute e has been variously treated in the description of French. It has been regarded by some investigators as a discrete, independent unit like other vowel sounds of French; others have considered it as a "variant" both of vowels and consonants; still others accord it "morphophonemic" rather than a purely "phonemic" existence. Needless to say, the varied interpretations stem from different orientations and insights.

An examination of the literature on mute e suggests three main lines of approach. We shall organise our discussion around two of the three main questions corresponding to these lines of approach; namely, the phonetic and phonological:

1. What are the characteristics, phonetic and acoustic, of mute e; is it an independent sound like other sounds?

2. What is the phonological status of mute e; in other words, what role does mute e play in the structure of French? and, finally,

3. Does mute e have any existence other than phonological existence?

These questions, in fact, represent three assumptions; namely, that mute e has phonetic, phonological and grammatical relevance in the description of French.

On the Phonetic and Phonological Character of Mute E

The main points at issue here are (1) that mute e has virtually the same quality as one of its "phonetic neighbours", the front rounded vowels [ø] and [œ]; (2) that mute e has an independent quality of its own.

P. Delattre, for example, notes: "Le timbre de l'e caduc n'est pas très fixé. En général, il est proche de l'eu ouvert. . . mais il peut varier jusqu'à être presque aussi fermé que l'eu fermé sans qu'une oreille française s'en offence" (Principes de Phonétique française à l'usage des étudiants anglo-américains - Middlebury, 1951: 23). P. Fouché also observes that "e muet n'est en réalité qu'une voyelle intermédiaire entre [ø] et [œ] plus proche cependant de [œ] que de [ø]" (Phonétique historique du français, Paris, 1952).

These two viewpoints are similar in that they assign mute e a more frequent relationship with [œ]. More recently, P. Léon has confirmed these observations by his examination of spoken Parisian French. He formulates the relationship, however, in terms of style. The [œ] - pronunciation of mute e in stressed position is identified with the "accent faubourien" of Paris. In the provinces, on the other hand, the pronunciation of mute e in stressed syllable is identified with [ø]. (Cf. "Apparition, maintien et chute du e caduc", La Linguistique, 1966/2, pp. 111-122). Referring to J. Varney-Pleasants' Etudes sur l'e muet

(Paris, 1956), Léon expresses the opinion that the characteristics of mute e as described by Varney-Pleasants would seem to be valid only for the speech of a single individual. According to Varney-Pleasants, mute e [ə] is phonetically nearer [ø] than [œ] (This is also the view of Grammont). Mute e is, however, more centrally located than [ø] or [œ]. Acoustically, it is characterized by variations of length, intensity and intonation as are other vowels (op. cit., p. 247).

In his article, "Le E muet et la hiérarchie structurale du français", Actes du X^e Congres International des Linguistes, 1967, A. Valdman observes, on the basis of investigations, that acoustically [ə] and [ø] almost completely overlap.

However that may be, to say that a sound is related to another is to say that the sounds in question have common features; it is also to deny implicitly that there is complete coalescence or identity of the sounds. It is therefore not rash to assert that [ə], [ø] and [œ] are three distinguishable sounds.

In fact, investigations by A. Martinet (La Prononciation du français contemporain, Paris, 1945) and C. Deyhime ("Enquête sur la phonologie du français contemporain", La Linguistique, 1967: 2) confirm the coexistence of the three sounds.

According to Martinet's investigation, 53% of the 66 Paris speakers investigated equated mute e with [ø] which is reportedly the tendency among speakers of Southern France (cf. supra); 20% with [œ]; of his 12 informants from the Sud-Ouest 72% equated mute e with [ø]; none identified it with [œ] and the rest held that mute e was different from [ø] and [œ].

Investigating the relationship between these sounds several years later, Deyhime found that the pronunciation of [ə] had become more popular in the North (and Paris) at the expense of [ø] and especially [œ]. The South continued to make consistent use of [ø], [ə] being less frequent and [œ] being practically non-existent (art. cit., p. 67).[1]

We have thus reason enough to believe that mute e has not been unaffected in the evolution of the sounds of French. According to the testimony of Gile Vaudelin, interpreted by A. Martinet, the three sounds were manifestly different in the 18th Century. Martinet, however, goes on to say that there is no reason to talk of a phoneme /ə/ in normal late 18th century French usage. ("Note sur la phonologie du français vers 1700", Bulletin de la société de linguistique de Paris, 43, 1947: p. 13-23).

On the behaviour of mute e in syllables, we may observe that, of the three related vowel sounds and ultimately of all French vowels, mute e is the only sound which may be elided or retained in sound sequences.

Considering the behaviour of mute e within the word, P. Delattre formulated the rule that mute e is dropped after a single consonant but retained after two or more ("Le jeu de l'e instable intérieur en français", French Review, fév., 1951, No. 4).

As Delattre himself points out, this rule is not unrelated to the general rule described as the "loi des trois consonnes" proposed by

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[1] For more recent observations on these sounds see A. Martinet et H. Walter, Dictionnaire de la prononciation française dans son usage réel; 1973, pp. 22-24; V. Lucci, "Le mecanisme du "E" muet dans différentes formes de français parlé", La Linguistique, vol. 12, Fasc 2/1976, pp. 87-104.

Grammont. However, it specifies that the maintenance of mute e is obligatory if the sequence of consonants formed a syllabically unified group; that is, if the first element is more open than the following consonant or is of the type "stop plus r/l". This is a refinement that Grammont's rule lacks. However, even Delattre's rule does not account for phenomena whose domain extends beyond the word. Proceeding from the hypotheses proposed by Delattre, A. Malecot ("The elision of the French mute-E within complex consonantal clusters", Lingua, V, 1, 1955, pp. 46-60) arrives at the more specific but otherwise not different conclusion that the maintenance and elision of mute e depend on the articulatory characteristics of the consonants involved: "Combined with a first consonant aperture greater than that of the second, a back-to-front sequence of points of articulation results in the facile and in fact frequently heard elision of mute e (e.g., fortement - [fɔrtmɑ̃]".

On the whole, Delattre's and Malecot's formulations are concerned with the "syllabic unicity" of consonants in combination and not with the distribution of consonant clusters as a factor in the maintenance and elision of mute e.

E. Pulgram ("French /ə/: Statics and Dynamics of Linguistic Subcodes", Lingua, 10, 1961, pp. 305-325) also observes that there are conditions that make the occurrence of mute e [ə] obligatory, whereas their absence makes it optional. Some of the conditions he considers are similar to those considered by Delattre and Malecot. Unlike them, however, he makes "frequency of occurrence" a factor in the retention and elision of mute e. He writes:

> In the description of French /ə/ there is involved a question of distribution of phonemes, chiefly a dependence on the

clustering of consonants. Certain types of clusters make it impossible for the /ə/ occurring in the neighbourhood to be omitted, other types of clusters and the absence of clusters make its articulation optional" (art. cit., p. 307).

This viewpoint permits him to formulate the following rules:

1. An /ə/ must be articulated where its omission would produce a non-occurring (that is, non-permissible) consonant cluster within a syllable.

2. In all other cases, the articulation of the /ə/ is optional, depending on style and subcode.

The classical rules for the maintenance and elision of mute e - the "loi des trois consonnes" - are, however, still generally valid, except at word juncture within the rhythmic group in contexts involving /r/.

These are, indeed, not the only factors involved in the maintenance and elision of mute e. There are reported instances where mute e has been inserted where there is none graphically. The main consideration here would appear to be not only the desire to simplify difficult clusters as is implied also by the suppression of consonants (consider "quat' femmes"), but also the desire to be understood. In such instances, "epenthetic", "parasitic" or "intercalative" mute e ensures intelligibility through redundancy (cf. P. E. Léon, art. cit., pp. 120-121). It also has a demarcative function. As Léon observes, the occurrence of mute e in positions other than initial increases in direct proportion with other factors of "good style".

From the above discussion, it is clear that [ə] [ø] and [œ] are phonetically related. We have also observed that the appearance,

maintenance and elision of mute e is largely determined by syllabic structure - "la loi des trois consonnes".

The next question which interests us is the phonemic status of [ə]; that is, whether [ə] belongs to the phoneme /ø/ or whether [ə] [ø] and [œ] are combinatory variants or allophones.

K. Togeby (Structure immanente de la langue française, Larousse, 1965) lists /ə/ in his phonemic inventory for French; /ə/ is distinct from /ø/; R. A. Hall, Jr. (Structural Sketch 1: French, 1948) also sets up ə as a phoneme; G. L. Trager also recognises a phoneme ə with [ᵊ] [ᵊ] and [əʷ] as allophones (cf. "French Morphology: Verb Inflection", Language, 31, No. 4); A. Martinet ("De l'économie des formes du verbe en français parlé" and "La nature phonologique d'e caduc" in Le français sans fard, P.U.F., 1969) considers mute e as a "lubrifiant phonique" (phonetic lubricant) with no phonological existence. He draws attention to the fact that there are few instances in French where mute e can contrast with a front-rounded vowel. These instances are exemplified by pairs like "je dis" - "jeudi", "je ne vaux rien" - "jeune vaurien". It is affirmed, however, that in normal style such pairs are homophonous.

Consequently, we cannot set up [ə] as a phoneme distinct from /ø/. The non-alternation of [ə] and [ø] in examples like "le haut/l'eau", "dehors/dort" etc. proves that [ə] has a distinctive function. P. E. Léon goes as far as to say that such examples of [ə]~[zéro] alternation or contrast which makes ə phonemic are so rare that one may say that in standard French there are no words that are distinguished by the presence or absence of mute e.

It is not conclusively proven, however, that ə/ø~œ never contrast,

and we still require further evidence of the non-distinction in all or some environments. It is difficult to see how Togeby, Hall and Trager arrive at their solutions; for Togeby ə occurs finally but it is not shown whether ə contrasts with ø in that position.

Martinet further writes (La prononciation (op. cit.), p. 66):

> En syllabe tonique e caduc est exceptionnel et n'apparaît qu'à la finale absolue d'où [œ] ouvert est exclu. D'autre part, pour des raisons de phonétique historique les eu du français sont surtout attestés en syllabe accentuée. A la prétonique on ne les trouve guère que dans des formes verbales ou l'analogie a unifié la voyelle du radical (je creuse, nous creusons; je heurte, nous heurtons) ou dans des dérivés (peureux, meurtrier, abreuvoir). Ceci limite beaucoup les possibilités d'apparition de l'opposition ə/œ ouvert. Des cas comme "je ne vaux rien/jeune vaurien" sont trop rares pour empêcher une confusion phonologique de se produire, et les locuteurs, même s'ils font entre [œ] ouvert et [ə] une très légère différence seront tentés de considérer [ə] comme une variante du phonème ouvert.

The opinions expressed by phoneticians and phonologists about mute e and its neighbours are varied and sometimes contradictory. In the light of some of these opinions two interpretations of the phonological status of mute e are possible.

First, if we consider [œ] and [ø] as members of different phonemes as is the case in another variety of French, we must say that mute e in final stressed syllable is replaced by or represented by [ø]. We are faced with the problem of accounting for pairs such as "sur ceux" and "sur ce". A non-distinction between mute e [ə] and [ø] would make the pair homophonous. This observation does not, however, invalidate the assumption that [ə] and [ø] are allophones. If, on the other hand, it is maintained that there is "contrast" between [ə] and [ø], in other words that /ə/ and /ø/ are different phonemes, then we must accept the

fact that in some of its realisations mute e or the phoneme ə is "zero" and "consonantal". This would seem to be the interpretation of R. Jakobson and J. Lotz ("Notes on the French Phonemic Pattern", Selected Writings, I, Mouton, 1962, pp. 426-434).

> A zero-phoneme which may be symbolised by ə or in analytical transcription by # is opposed to all other French phonemes by the absence both of distinctive features and of a constant sound characteristic. On the other hand the zero phoneme ə is opposed to the absence of any phoneme whatsoever. In initial prevocalic position this phoneme is known under the name "h aspiré" although under emphasis it can be implemented as an aspiration. . . .

With a formulation of the phonological status of [ə] such as the above we are also faced with the problem of interpreting forms such as /dd/, /mm/, /tt/ - geminate consonants resulting from the elision or dropping of mute e. Consider the following:

là-dedans / la dent

tu me mens / tu mens, and

netteté -

Martinet would consider mute e as a varient of each of these consonant phonemes; namely, /d/, /m/, and /t/.. He writes:

> La formulation peut-être la plus suggestive est celle selon laquelle l'e caduc caractérise une variante de chacun des phonèmes consonantiques du français; soit le phonème /d/; il se prononce [d] devant un phonème vocalique, dans "dans", "dors", "dine"; il se prononce également [d] après voyelle et devant consonne unique comme dans "là-dedans" [laddã] mais il se réalise comme [də] entre consonnes. . . dans "par devant" [pardəvã] par exemple" (cf. "La nature phonologique d'e caduc").

This viewpoint is also espoused by B. Malmberg (Le système consonantique du français moderne, 1943).

Contrastive analysis and the determination of linguistic interference are not independent of descriptive problems such as these. For

the proper interpretation of interference phenomena in bilingual research, it becomes therefore important that the investigator be fully aware of all the descriptive problems existing in the foreign language and the various solutions proposed.

CHAPTER 3

THE LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS OF THE WEST AFRICAN STUDENT

The single most important problem of foreign language teaching and learning is undoubtedly interference from languages already acquired.

Since West African countries are all multilingual but differ as to the degree of multilingualism from the point of view of the number of indigenous languages used or officially recognized, we may consider foreign language and African language contact to be of the following types:

i. Contact between indigenous languages. This type of contact seems to be most likely in rural communities; although it is conceivable that one of several indigenous languages may be used extensively, this does not rule out the possibility of the individual employing another less extensively used language.

ii. Contact between indigenous languages and English or French with English or French serving as the official (i.e., second) language but spoken by a relatively small proportion of the population.

This type of contact situation applies to all African countries whether they are generally described as 'English-speaking' or 'French-speaking'. Notice that the fact of less than 10% of the African population of any African country having a command of either language does not cancel such a situation.

An indigenous language may be a national language or lingua franca

and may alternate with the official language in a number of situations. Swahili in Tanzania, Wolof in Senegal and Amharic in Ethiopia may be cited here as examples.

iii. Contact between indigenous languages, English and French with English or French as a foreign language (i.e., adopted into the educational system but not used compulsorily in national institutions). This type of situation may be restricted to a smaller group than in (ii) and may be the result of occupation, geography, education, status or politics.

iv. Contact between indigenous languages English or French and "sub-standard" varieties of English or French with these being employed in situations where indigenous languages and English or French cannot be used. This type of contact situation is reported in the Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Cameroon, for example.

v. Contact between indigenous languages, English and French with English and French serving as official national languages. Cameroon is the only West African country that is officially bilingual.

The first type of contact situation is becoming increasingly rare as even the remotest village becomes exposed to "sub-varieties" or to standard varieties of English or French either through the influence of the radio or educated indigenes.

Assuming that an individual may know up to five but not seven West African languages in addition to English and/or French (FL) and the sub-standard variety thereof, the following typology of interference patterns may be proposed (L stands for indigenous languages, FL_{ST} for foreign language sub-variety or sub-standard variety).

Note that there could be an infinite number of variations of the

suggested patterns according to situations and speaker. It is impossible to predict what languages may be used in given situations by the individual. The patterns suggested are the simplest:

1. $L_1 + FL_1$
2. $L_1 + L_2 + FL_1$
3. $L_1 + L_2 + L_3 + FL_1$
4. $L_1 + L_2 + L_3 + L_4 + FL_1$
5. $L_1 + L_2 + L_3 + L_4 + L_5 + FL_1$
6. $L_1 + L_2 + L_3 + L_4 + L_5 + FL_1 + FL_2$
7. $L_1 + L_2 + L_3 + L_4 + L_5 + FL_1 + FL_2 + FL_{ST}$

This implies that there could be interference in principle from all the known languages; the degree and nature of interference will, however, depend on factors that are not easily isolatable or identifiable.

The interference may not necessarily be total in each of the seven simplified cases: there may be influence from the phonology of two languages rather than one, while there may be influence from the syntax or lexicon of another language. It is also possible in principle that there may be influence from only one or two of the several languages known. But given that an individual may know seven languages, the problem of determining to which of these languages the observed interference phenomena may be attributed seems rather acute.

Interference being, by definition, individual, it seems unwise to be too categorical about what linguistic problems will face the West African student; in other words, it seems unprofitable and impossible to predict problems the West African student will have in learning French.

According to theories of interference, some of which we presented

earlier, interference cannot be satisfactorily identified unless the norms of the languages in contact are known through comparison of the languages. Consequently, one would expect for the numerous West African contact situations comparisons between African languages and French. Now, comparison between languages yields no more than potential forms of interference. It is possible, it seems to us, to identify interference phenomena in actual performance if only one norm is known, and this is based on the assumption that any phenomenon not traceable to or explainable in terms of the norm of the language interfered with, belongs to the other language, the mother tongue or a second language, etc.

Since our main preoccupation is to describe the difficulties West African students of French have, we consider it sufficient to indicate in individual performances all features "foreign" to the French norm which we know and identify as standard French with such difficulties. Notice that methodologically this is not the same thing as attributing the difficulties to causes.

We shall take our own research in the Ivory Coast and Ghana as a basis for identifying the West African student's difficulties.

The Corpus

The corpus examined here is of two types:

1. The first is based on interviews which took place at Abidjan, Ivory Coast between January 8th and February 21st, 1968. The interviews were recorded by means of a FICORD-202 and UHER 4000 RL tape recorders.

The corpus covers five primary schools within approximately ten miles from one another; three secondary schools equi-distant from one another; two technical schools; primary school teachers, university

students and private persons - educated as well as uneducated - men and women. The ages of the informants range between seven and forty-five years.

Informants from educational institutions (except the University) were selected with the active participation of Heads. While school pupils were informed of the purport of the exercise only during recording sessions in order to keep responses as spontaneous as possible, private individuals were informed beforehand as their willingness to participate in the exercise critically depended on this. This does not, however, make their responses less spontaneous since they had the choice of questions and could refuse to discuss particular subjects.

In all, over a hundred people from three language backgrounds: Agni, Appolo (= Nzema) and Baule, were interviewed. Each interview took between three and thirty minutes, depending on the educational level and "facility of expression" of informant. All classes of primary (except the first year, Cours préparatoire I) and secondary education are represented. The distribution of informants by level and ethnic group follows. Subjects of conversation were generally introduced by the writer and were varied according to the circumstances (choice, and expression capabilities as these were revealed in the course of conversation) of the informant. Although questionnaires had previously (that is, pre-interviews) been established for each category, questions had often to be modified in the course of actual interviews. The questions are presented in Appendix A in a generalised non-transcribed form. Their present form and sequence are not necessarily the same. The recorded responses have been transcribed for analysis according to the alphabet and principles of the

International Phonetic Association.

As different categories of speakers are involved, it has been found necessary and more practical to: 1) analyse the corpus for each category separately; 2) see what phenomena can be said to be particular to each category and common to all categories.

The generalisations cover all the categories unless indicated to the contrary. A phenomenon which occurs once (a hapax) is considered as "accidental" but when it occurs in the speech of two or more people, it is noted.

The distribution of informants according to the level of education and ethnic group is as follows:

DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMANTS ACCORDING TO THEIR LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND ETHNIC GROUP

LEVEL	BAULE	AGNI	APPOLO	TOTAL
CATEGORY 1 University:				
Men	4	4	1	9
Women	1	-	1	2
Total	5	4	2	11
CATEGORY 2 Secondary				
Boys	12	14	2	29
Girls	5	5	4	14
Total	17	19	6	43
CATEGORY 3 Technical/Professional & Private Persons:				
Men	2	3	2	7
Women	4	6	3	13
Total	6	9	5	20

Distribution of Informants Table (Continued)

LEVEL	BAULE	AGNI	APPOLO	TOTAL
CATEGORY 4				
Primary:				
Boys	7	5	4	16
Girls	6	3	1	10
Total	13	8	5	26
CATEGORY 5				
Uneducated:				
Men	-	-	-	-
Women	2	-	1	3
Total	2	-	1	3
TOTAL FOR ETHNIC GROUPS				
Men	25	26	9	61
Women	18	14	10	42
Total	43	40	19	103

2. The second type of corpus is based on a reading exercise conducted in two secondary schools in the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. Exactly one hundred pupils were involved in the exercise. The reading passages are presented in Appendix B.

Following is the distribution of students of French according to their native language, age and form:

1 - HALF ASSINI SECONDARY SCHOOL

NZEMA	28 students
FANTE	4 students
TWI	4 students

Two other students are Agnis, but speak Nzema. Since the total number of Nzema-speaking students is 28, Nzema is obviously the dominant language in the above school.

Half Assini Secondary School was a fairly new school at the time of the exercise and had no Sixth Form. The 38 students who were interviewed were drawn from only two forms (4 and 5) with the following representation:

Form 4	28 students
Form 5	12 students

Twenty students had originally been required from each form but since not all Form 5 students learn French, it became necessary to supplement the number for Form 5 from Form 4.

The distribution of students according to age is as follows:

Over 22 years	2 students
About 18 years	10 "
18 "	14 "
17 "	7 "
16 "	3 "
15 "	2 "

The average age of the 38 students is roughly 18 years.

2 - MFANTSIPIM SCHOOL – CAPE COAST

Sixty-two pupils were interviewed in this school. Mfantsipim has a Sixth Form, so the 62 students of French were drawn from three forms with Lower and Upper Sixth constituting a form.

The distribution of students is again according to native

language, form and age:

FANTE	35 students
TWI	13 students
EWE	7 students
GA	6 students

The numbers of students interviewed per form at Mfantsipim are as follows:

Form 4	19 (16 Fantes, 2 Twis, 1 Ewe)
Form 5	22 (12 Fantes, 6 Twis, 3 Gas, 1 Aowin)
Form 6	21 (7 Fantes, 5 Twis, 3 Gas, 6 Ewes)

The distribution of students according to age is:

Over 20 years	1 student
20 years	14 students
19 "	2 "
18 "	13 "
17 "	18 "
16 "	12 "
15 "	2 "

After the reading passages, a conversation in French was begun by the investigator as a means of determining, during the analysis of the corpus whether mispronunciations made during the reading were random or genuine cases of difficulty.

At Cape Coast there was a general desire among Upper Form students to speak French, and questions ranged from the use of the present tense, to the subjunctive, while at Half Assini only a few students voluntarily took part in a conversation begun by the interviewer.

The readings and conversations were recorded on tape in January at Cape Coast between the 11th and 14th and at Half Assini between the 18th and 20th, 1966.

The recorded readings and conversations for the hundred students were then later transcribed phonetically, using the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association. The transcriptions were then carefully examined individually; that is, for each student and the various "mispronunciations" entered on cards - an error per card. These cards were then arranged according to the French sound system.

It will be seen that Fante, Nzema and Twi are the dominant or majority languages. The overall representation of the Ghanaian languages involved in the exercise is as follows:

FANTE	39 students
NZEMA	31 "
TWI	17 "
EWE	7 "
GA	6 "

For methodological reasons, we shall be mainly concerned with phenomena observed among Fantes, Nzemas and Twis; that is, the Akan informants of Ghana as a basis for the comparisons envisaged, although we shall occasionally refer to other groups.

Now, there is an important difference between our Ivorian and Ghanaian informants. The difference resides in the fact that we have to do in the case of the Ivory Coast with contact between French and Akan languages, therefore with a roughly <u>bilingual</u> situation, while in the case of Ghana, the contact is <u>trilingual</u>: French and English and Akan

languages. Another difference implied in the bilingual-trilingual distinction is that, whereas French is an official language in the Ivory Coast and had been used by our Ivorian informants for periods ranging between five years and forty years; that is, from primary school to university, it is a foreign language, that is, taught as optional subject only from secondary school to university in Ghana; consequently, our Ghanaian informants had been studying the language for period ranging from three years to seven years in this formal setting.

Although it would be of interest to determine which of the features to be presented could be considered as properly "West African", we shall not examine that dimension as it would involve detailed comparisons and would consequently take us too far afield (see, however, E. N. Kwofie, "Une description phonologique du français parlé des sujets ivoiriens (pour une comparaison de quelques variétés du français)", EUREKA: A Journal of French Studies, Lagos, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1976: 59-68; forthcoming also in La Linguistique, Paris).

The Phonological Characteristics of the French of Some West African Students

The speech forms studied for our Ivorian Akan-speakers are generally characterized by the following features, with few individual exceptions. These features do not, however, have the same frequency of occurrence.

1. Laxness of articulation with, as one of its effects, the use of more allophonic variations than are ordinarily used in standard French.

2. The denasalisation of vowels: a nasalised vowel is frequently replaced by an oral vowel with or without a following nasal consonant.

3. The reduction of consonant clusters: the elision of usually an element from a cluster in all positions (initial after the first member of the cluster, medial and final); the elision of single final consonant or group of final consonants.

4. The labialisation, affrication and palatalisation of certain consonants.

5. The 'spelling pronunciation' of a small number of words.

Of the above five identified features 1, 2, 4 and 5 have been found also to characterise the Akan-speaking students of Ghana, although not in exactly the same detail. We shall describe the five phenomena under two headings, A - VOWELS, and B - CONSONANTS, as they apply to these categories.

A - VOWELS

1. Laxness of Articulation

Among the vowels used frequently in speech forms by our Ivorian informants are the short vowels I and ʊ. The most general conditioning factor for the appearance of these sounds is the element /r/; but they occur in open syllables or syllables made open by the elision of a closing element and outside the environment of [r] as well. I is used as a replacement for standard French i, e, ɛ and ə while ʊ is used in place of u. Following are examples:

i - i is pronounced as I in words like architecte, il, ricanant, résister, attribuer, arrivée

Compare fini, qui

ii - e is pronounced as I in words like préféré, résister, réfléchi, présensibilisé

iii - ɛ is pronounced as I in words like prépare, préparatoire

iv - e is pronounced as I in words like refroidi, retient, reproduit

v - u is pronounced as [illegible], in the words pour, pourquoi, brousse and où

The consequences of the use of I for the four standard French oral vowels are 1) the neutralisation of the opposition e/ə which is considered to mark the grammatical category: plurality/singularity in French, and 2) the overlap of e and ɛ or the neutralisation of the distinction open/closed syllable structure which is employed as a criterion for phonemicisation in French. The e/ɛ distinction in final position is held by some analysts to underlie tense distinctions such as simple past/imperfect; future/conditional.

It is interesting to note here in passing that the examples presented earlier in this chapter with respect to our 1973 interview with a native French speaker show the neutralisation of these grammatical distinctions. It is, in fact, known that the e/ɛ distinction is precarious in the sense that it is not consistently observed by many native speakers of French.

Another point worthy of note but which does not necessarily represent a difficulty is that our Ivorian speakers are all "conservative" in their pronunciation of the determiners les, mes, des, etc. with the sound [ɛ] which is the sound recommended by treatises on French phonetics (cf. P. Martinon, Comment on prononce le français, 1913: 56; and G. Straka, "La prononciation parisienne, ses divers aspects et ses traits généraux", Bulletin de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg, 1952: 1-45).

We may remark here in corroboration of an objection made against

H. Sten (1966) earlier in Chapter 2 that several of our Ghanaian subjects in one school confused e and ɛ presumably under the influence of their teacher who pronounced the following words with e and ɛ , sometimes "indiscriminately": souffl<u>ai</u>t (e), franç<u>ai</u>s (e), il <u>est</u> (e), c'ét<u>ai</u>t (e), angél<u>u</u>s (ɛ), sol<u>ei</u>l (e).

Here, too, the pronunciation by our Ghanaian subjects of <u>les</u> and <u>nes</u> with [ɛ] can be said to be "conservative" and comparable to that of their Ivorian counterparts.

The replacement of only one of the four standard French oral vowels by I is, however, attested among our Ghanaian subjects: <u>ressource</u> is pronounced as [risɔ:s]; the element I also appears in a nasalised form in place of [ɛ̃] (see under 2 - <u>Denasalisation</u>). The short vowel [ʊ] appears in the word <u>foule</u> in the pronunciation of only three students, in <u>pour</u> in that of ten students and also as replacement for French [y] in a large number of cases; I also occurs in place of [y].

Bound up with the neutralisation or overlap of e and ɛ is that of ø and œ. Both e and ø are frequently found in closed instead of open syllables in the pronunciation of our Ivorian subjects. ɛ and œ also occur in open syllables or in syllables made open by the loss of the closing element as well as in closed syllables. Added to this haphazard distribution of the four sounds are the substitutions: ɛ for œ, e for ø, and i for y among several others. These substitutions have also been observed among our Ghanaian subjects. Thus words like labour<u>eur</u>, longu<u>eur</u>, h<u>eure</u> et s<u>eul</u> are realised with [ɛ] while m<u>ieux</u>, m<u>essieurs</u> and p<u>eut</u> are pronounced with e by Ghanaian Akan-speaking students (see Appendix B).

Here are some examples for our Ivorian subjects:

1. e appears in closed syllable as in cet homme, verre, seize, cet argent
2. e appears as substitute for ø in fameux, deux, mieux, monsieur, etc,
3. ø appears in closed syllable as substitute for œ: docteur, jeune, fleuve
4. ɛ appears as substitute for œ: leur, cultivateur
5. i appears as substitute for y: une, jusqu'à, fut, cultivateur

Compare the following examples from our Ghana corpus: une foule, régularité

2. Denasalisation of Vowels

Denasalisation is a term applied to instances where a normally nasalised vowel is replaced by an oral vowel with a following nasal consonant under the influence of an adjacent word beginning with a vowel. The instances where nasalised vowels lose their nasality in French are instances of liaison or sandhi.

We are applying the term "denasalisation" to the instances where a nasalised vowel loses its nasality or is replaced by an oral vowel with or without a following nasal consonant without conditioning factors.

We have observed the following forms among our Akan-speaking students of the Ivory Coast, especially those in primary and secondary schools.

a) The standard French nasalised vowel ɑ̃ is variously pronounced as ɑ̃, ɛn, an and a. Notice here that the nasal a in standard French is normally a back rather than a front vowel.

Sequences like s'en alla, changé, antilope, descendre, rencontrer and quand même are consequently pronounced as [sɛnala], [ʃɛnʒe], [antilɔp], [desan], [rankɔ̃tre] and [kamɛm], respectively.

b) The French $\tilde{\varepsilon}$ is pronounced as $\tilde{\text{æ}}$, ε, in and as $\tilde{\text{I}}$. Examples of such pronunciations are [sɛtæ̃] for certain, [afrikæ̃] for africain, [mɛtna] for maintenant, [impɔtan] for important, [matĩ] for matin, and [platĩ] for plantain.

c) the standard French $\tilde{\text{ɔ}}$ which is closer in fact to $\tilde{\text{o}}$ is pronounced as $\tilde{\text{ɔ}}$, ɔn and ɔ. Thus, monte is realised as [mɔt], noms des objets is realised as [nɔdɛzɔbʒɛ], etc.

The phenomena observed among our Akan-speaking subjects of Ghana show complete divergence from the pronunciation of our Ivorian subjects. The French vowel [$\tilde{\varepsilon}$] in words like rien, imposant, matin, tintent, afin and jardin (see Appendix B) is pronounced as [$\tilde{\text{ɔ}}$] by Fante-speaking students principally. There is also some confusion among Fantes and Twis of the French sounds [$\tilde{\text{œ}}$] and [$\tilde{\text{ɔ}}$], on the one hand, and [$\tilde{\varepsilon}$] and [$\tilde{\text{a}}$] on the other.

There are also several instances of denasalisation, though these are limited to the pronunciations: [anʒɛlu] for angélus, [apsɛnt] for absent, [kɔnt] for compte, [bank] for banc, [sɛnuil] for s'ennuie and [dimaande] for demandé. Denasalisation appears to be a serious

problem for the Ghanaian student in view of the fact that 15 Fantes, 10 Twis, 5 Gas and 5 Ewes are involved in this phenomenon. Translated into percentages, these figures are respectively 38%, 58%, 71% and 83% which are rather high.

B - CONSONANTS

1. Laxness of Articulation

We have observed that the articulation of French vowels tends to be lax among our Akan-speaking Ivorian students: we identify the appearance of the short vowels I and ʊ with laxness of articulation. If this assumption is valid, one would expect a similar phenomenon to occur in the consonantal system, though this need not necessarily happen.

There is indeed a general tendency to retain voiceless consonants and to eliminate voiced ones, or to replace voiced consonants by voiceless ones. We have also observed, however, the replacement of voiced consonants by other voiced consonants: this is particularly the case of [ɟ] for [ʒ] and [d]; j for [ʒ] and [g]. It would be interesting in such cases to determine which of the consonants is more lax; but this requires acoustic or experimental demonstration which we are not in a position to provide. However, the important point here is that with the elimination of voiced consonants or their replacement by voiceless consonants, the balance of the French consonant system is destroyed.

There is a theoretical problem that we must point out here: voiceless consonants are considered in general phonetics literature as tense, while voiced consonants are described as lax.

Within this technical terminology, the process of replacing voiced

consonants by voiceless ones would lead to a tensing of the French consonant system used by our Ivorian informants. Thus, it is the opposite effect of what happens in the vowel system that we observe in the consonant system.

Following are some examples of the substitutions from the Ivory Coast corpus. Most of the instances of wrong substitution are limited to the primary level, and are fewer than have been observed for our Ghanaian subjects:

ʒ becomes ʃ, ʄ or j in je, jusqu'à, etc.

z becomes s in chose

s becomes ʃ, however, in population in one university student's pronunciation. He is Agni.

From our Ghana corpus we may cite the following examples, some of which are idiosyncratic or marginal but show what difficulties arise nonetheless:

ʒ becomes ʄ in angélus, page, joli, horloge, jardin

ʒ becomes ɟ in angélus in the pronunciation of four Fantes only

ʒ becomes j in journée, jardin and je for three Fantes

ʒ becomes ʃ in journée, jour and jardin for only 1 Fante

z becomes s in imposant, désordre, mesurer, conduisait, maison and chose. This last substitution was observed in the pronunciation of 27 Fantes, 10 Twis, 5 Gas, and 3 Ewes.

2. Reduction of Consonant Clusters

The clusters most frequently simplified are of different types.

The phenomenon is widespread and has been observed at several levels of education, although with varying frequency. Here are examples of the various types of reduction.

i) consonant + r/l; for example, pr, tr, fr, pl, etc.

Thus, professeur becomes pofesseur; pr > p

descendre becomes descen: dr > zero

ii) r + two other consonants; e.g., rbr, rkw, etc.

Thus, pourquoi becomes pouqoui: rkw > kw

arbre becomes arb: rbr > rb

iii) ks, sk, kt, gz, vw, etc.

Thus, excuser becomes esuser: ks > s

discussion becomes disussion: sk > s

exemple becomes ezemp: gz > z

voilà becomes oilà: vw > w

iv) Combinations of four consonants tend to be reduced to three.

Thus as in exprimer kspr > spr

Tied up with consonant cluster simplification is the general tendency to elide [r] from all but initial position.

3. Labialisation, Affrication and Palatalisation

It is a general phonetic fact that consonants are generally more labialised or palatalised according to the nature of the vowels that occur after them. What is considered here as labialisation and palatalisation is the perception of a distinct [w] and [j] sound respectively after a releasing element and before the nucleus; i.e., the vowel. We have observed that [k] tends to be labialised in the environment of [œ] and [ə] among our Ivorian subjects. Thus, aucun is pronounced frequently as

[okuv͡ɛ̃] and [l], [s] and [t] tend to be palatalised in the environment of [y]. Thus habitude and mesure, etc. are pronounced as [abitjid], [mɔ̃ji:r], etc.

Affrication is applied to plosive consonants produced with a distinctive fricative sound; [t] and [d] are generally affricated in the environment of [i], [e], [y] and utterance or word finally. Thus, cuit, accuse and actuellement frequently become [t͡svi] [at͡syz] and [ak.t͡swɛlmã].

Examples from our Ghanaian subjects are the following:

naturellement becomes [nat͡sIrɛlmã] or [nat͡svrɛlmã]

voiture becomes [vwatju].

4. Spelling Pronunciation

Spelling pronunciation is by no means widespread in the speech forms examined for our Ivorian subjects. It is restricted to the forms j'ai and gens pronounced respectively as [ʒaI] and [ʒãs]. [ʒaI] appears frequently in the pronunciation of subjects belonging to various educational levels alongside [ʒɛ] for the same form j'ai, while [ʒas] seems to be idiosyncratic.

Spelling pronunciation is, however, widespread among our Ghanaian subjects. Consider the following examples:

naturellement becomes [nat͡sIrɛlmã] or [nat͡svrɛlmã]

ressource becomes [rIsɔ:s]

pour becomes [pɔ:]

descend becomes [disɛnd], [disand]

désordre becomes [dIsɔ:dr]

revue becomes [rIviw]

figure becomes [figɛ:]

These spelling pronunciations seem to show that where the correct pronunciation of a word is not known, recourse is often had to an orthographically similar word known by the student. These pronunciations seem to be a compromise between French and English pronunciation.

The features presented above do not characterise all our informants to the same extent; what we have done is to consider the most frequent occurrences and generalise therefrom; we have also sometimes included isolated cases of difficulty to show that such difficulties exist, if not for every West African student, at least for some.

The features discussed do not all impinge on comprehension in the same way. Some of them may be considered as serious difficulties; that is, may have phonological or phonemic implications while others are merely phonetic. Laxness of articulation, denasalisation and consonant cluster simplification may have phonemic effects, while labialisation, palatalisation, affrication and spelling pronunciation may have phonetic effects. The seriousness of these as an impediment to intelligibility may, however, be apparent in connected discourse.

Now, the characteristics we have identified above also appear in the findings of the Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Dakar (C.L.A.D.), although the methods of analysis employed are different from ours; the informants belong also to different linguistic backgrounds - Wolof and Bambara, and different countries, Senegal and Mali.

According to Publication No. 4B, of about 70,000 words or 225,000 phoneme realisations recorded in 1964 by secondary school pupils,

32 per cent were "phonetic deviations"; that is, out of every 100 phoneme realisations 32 were deviant. Among the deviations were the following with corresponding percentages:

i. the confusion of £/e, œ/ø - 12%

ii. the confusion of i/y, y/u - 1%

iii. the denasalisation of vowels - 5% compared with 10% for primary school children

iv. consonant cluster simplification - 6% compared with 10% for primary school children.

It was observed that of consonant clusters which presented difficulties, the majority were of the form

consonant + r/l.

The elision of r was found to constitute 8.5% of the reductions.

v. [ʒ] was replaced in 2% of the cases by [j] or [z].

CONCLUSION

French is the official language, the language of education of more than ten West African countries; it is taught also as a foreign language in four others. We cannot, therefore, claim to have recorded here all the linguistic problems of West African students. However, considering that the findings of C.L.A.D. for Senegal are not very much different from those presented for the Ivory Coast and that there are significant parallels among Akan-speaking Ivorians and Akan-speaking Ghanaians learning French, we can say that the difficulties of West African students of French are strikingly similar. A detailed examination and comparison of data for all West African countries would certainly turn up divergences which may perhaps be correlated with different languages, but would perhaps also confirm the resemblances that we have sketched and generalised here.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GENERALIZED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Comment vous appelez-vous?

2. Quel âge avez-vous?

3. Vous êtes né(e) ici à Abidjan?

4. Combien de frères/soeurs avez-vous?

5. Il y a longtemps que vous êtes dans cette école (cet établissement)?

6. Avez-vous jamais pensé à la profession que vous voudriez choisir à la fin de vos études? Pourquoi l'avez-vous choisie?

7. Vous êtes de quelle religion? Vous êtes pratiquant?

8. Qu'est-ce que vous faites pour vous distraire quand vous n'êtes pas en classe (au bureau, etc.)?

9. Vous écoutez les émissions radiophoniques? Lesquelles?

10. Vous êtes sportif (-ve)? Quels sports aimez-vous?

11. Comment est-ce que vous avez appris le français? A quelle occasion le parlez-vous (l'employez-vous)?

12. Que pensez-vous de votre professeur (maître) de français: si vous étiez à sa place, que feriez-vous?

13. Que pensez-vous de l'unité africaine? Croyez-vous qu'elle soit réalisable ou précaire?

14. Quelle langue africaine ou bien européenne voudriez-vous qu'on choisisse comme moyen unificateur pour toute l'Afrique?

15. Qu'est-ce que vous pensez de l'émancipation de la femme africaine? Croyez-vous que cela s'accorde avec la tradition africaine (la polygamie, par exemple)?

16. Est-ce que vous auriez un sujet particulier dont vous voudriez me parler: une histoire ou un conte?

Generalized Questionnaire (Continued)

17. Supposons que vous ayez des enfants, comment est-ce que vous allez leur apprendre votre langue maternelle?

18. Croyez-vous que le français soit le meilleur moyen de s'exprimer par rapport aux langues vernaculaires?

19. Si vous discutiez des questions de ménage avec votre femme et que vos enfants fussent (étaient) là, que feriez-vous?

20. Pourriez-vous me parler de votre métier?

APPENDIX B

1. Maman est absente pour toute la journée. Elle est partie ce matin avec une foule de messieurs et de dames dans une grande voiture; Monsieur Ackesson conduisait et Monsieur Bampo soufflait dans une grande trompette. C'était très joli. Naturellement Kwame est resté à la maison. Il est trop petit. On a prié Akosua de venir passer la journée avec lui, afin qu'il ne s'ennuie pas. Kwame aurait mieux aimé rester seul avec Kobina, mais on ne lui a pas demandé son avis.

   Akosua est assise sur un banc au fond du jardin. Elle lit un livre anglais. Ses lunettes surmontent son nez imposant. Aucun muscle de sa figure ne tressaille. Elle tourne les pages avec une régularité automatique. Kwame a essayé de faire pas mal de choses; mais rien ne l'amuse beaucoup. Enfin il va à son petit coin de jardin afin de le passer en revue. Il est assez en désordre ce jardin.

2. C'est une chose très particulière, dont on ne peut se rendre compte en nos pays où l'on se lève avec le jour, où l'on se couche avec la nuit; où tintent les angélus du matin, de midi, du soir; où le soleil monte, plane, descend, avec une régularité de poids d'une horloge; où le laboureur, à défaut d'autre cadran, a la ressource de mésurer l'heure à la longueur de son ombre.

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The goal of linguistics as a science is a universally-applicable dynamic theory of human communication. Such a theory should not only reflect what native speakers know about their languages and how they use this knowledge to communicate, but also should explicate the creative aspect of symbolic expressions. This dynamic theory should grow out of data about known languages and draw upon the diversity of present-day theories. Traditional disciplinary boundaries, in relation to these goals, are contrary to the pursuit of learning and truth.

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